

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Korea

SUBJECT Mail Censorship in North Korea

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1. One of the functions of the Bureau of State Security in North Korea is the censorship of communications, including both domestic and foreign mail. Special attention is given to correspondence addressed to South Korea.
2. Since the beginning of March 1950, stricter censorship methods have been put into effect. The reason for increased scientific examination of mail is believed by North Korean residents to be the fact that, as security restrictions have reduced the number of border crossers, and consequently the number of verbal messages carried between north and south, more information is being transmitted by mail. Special representatives of the Bureau of State Security are stationed in post offices to examine all mail arriving from South Korea, and letters are treated chemically to ascertain whether they have any secret writing. Outgoing correspondence to South Korea is likewise thoroughly examined.
3. Records are kept of political and ideological statements which are suspect and ideological tendencies shown in correspondence are carefully studied. Some recipients of suspicious letters have been detained by the police until the letters were cleared, and others whose correspondence was capable of unfavorable political interpretation have been charged as reactionaries and punished.
4. Two examples are CHŎN Chung-ryŏng (金仲明), a building contractor in Wonsan (127-26, 39-10) and KIM Ch'ang-chun (金昌俊), manager of a noodle shop in Nampuk-ni (南浦里), Wonsan. CHŎN was arrested at the beginning of March 1950 because he received a letter from a nephew who manages a tailor shop in Chumchon (127-44, 37-52), South Korea. KIM was arrested approximately 5 March on suspicion of being an informant of the South Korean army, after he received a letter from a relative in the South Korean army inquiring about his health. It is believed that KIM's case will be tried in the People's Court. More than ten other persons are under detention in the Bureau of State Security jail as a result of receiving letters from South Korea.
5. Because of the severity of mail censorship and the repressive measures that have been taken against correspondents, fewer persons are writing to South Korea. The increased strictness of outgoing mail censorship is attributed to official desire to conceal the declining economic situation in North Korea.

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